

Commander of Air Force Iran Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi and Pakistani Army chief General Syed Asim Munir Conferred on Expanding Bilateral Interactions As Well as Military, Educational, Defense, and Security Ties

IRAN NEWS

The Chief of Promotion for the Lebanese Islamic Monotheism Movement and a Sunni Islamic Researcher Said that Ayatollah Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Always Stresses Islamic Unity

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Turning Security Borders Into Economic Borders Iran Strategy
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Iraq Did Not Notify U.S. of Oil For Gas Deal With Iran

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraqi officials did not notify their U.S. counterparts before reaching the recent deal to barter oil for natural gas with Iran, the Associated Press reported on 16 July, in a test of Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's independence from Washington.

The oil-and-gas deal signed this week will send 250,000 barrels of crude oil to Iran per day in exchange for Iranian natural gas, which Iraq depends on for some 40 percent of its electricity production.

Iran had cut gas supplies to Iraq in recent weeks, causing severe electricity shortages at the height of a brutally hot summer due to non-payment from the Iraqi side.

The Iraqi Trade Bank must obtain waivers from the US Treasury to transfer dollars to Iran as a result of U.S. sanctions on Tehran. Such waivers are often delayed, which has caused Iraq to owe Iran some 11 billion dollars for gas already received.

Iraqi officials contend no permission from the U.S. for the barter deal was needed, since it facilitates non-financial transactions.

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Sanctions Not to Affect Iran-China Trade Ties Seriously



همایش بازرگانی و سرمایه گذاری ایران و چین
 Iran- China Business and Investment Forum

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Economy Ehsan Khandouzi has emphasized that the existence of certain sanctions cannot seriously affect the determination of Iran and China to expand economic and trade ties.

The Iranian minister made the remarks at the Iran-China Business and Investment Forum in the Chinese capital, noting that it may not be an exaggeration to say the determination of high-ranking officials of the two countries to expand bilateral economic relations has never been so high as the recent decades.

The presence of sanctions cannot seriously impact the determination of the two countries to develop economic and trade exchanges, he argued.

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3 DOMESTIC

Tehran-Europe Trade In Lowest Level for Now
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Top Official Hails French Court's Rejection of U.S. Anti-Iran Verdict

TEHRAN (PresTV) - Iran's vice president for legal affairs has hailed the French supreme court's decision to reject a US request to confiscate \$247 million in Iranian assets, saying it marked an important achievement for the Islamic Republic.

On June 28, the French Court of Cassation upheld a March 2021 verdict by a court of appeal which refused the US call for confiscating Iranian assets as per a US federal court verdict in 1998.

"This measure marks a very important legal achievement for the Islamic Republic of Iran and the [Raeisi] administration, because it cemented the failure of the US pressures to have their rulings recognized and implemented in Europe," Mohammad Dehqan said on Saturday.

Dehqan argued that the verdict will have an important reverberation on European countries' judicial procedure and in their courage to dismiss US bids to impose its baseless and unfounded rulings on them. Back in 1998, a US court ordered Iran to pay \$247 million to the family of Alisa Flatow, a 20-year-old US citizen killed in a bomb explosion in Gaza in April 1995, claiming that Iran was responsible for her death over its alleged support for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which claimed responsibility for the act.

Announcement
 Gohar Zamin Iron Ore Company
 (Public Joint Stock)



Gohar Zamin Iron Ore Co.

Third Announcement

Gohar Zamin Iron Ore Company intends to identify all commercial companies that are able to purchase iron ore pellets with the average FE 65% as FAS (INCOTERMS 2020) as deliver it to the customer's warehouse in BandarAbbas to sell this product in foreign markets such as China, Turkey, India, Oman, etc. Therefore, all the capable companies which have exported more than 500 thousand metric tons of mineral products in the last two years are invited to submit the original letter of representative from the foreign producer company (End user), in addition to all necessary financial and commercial documents of their Iranian and foreign companies, through the official email of the mother company to the electronic address to read as commercial-dep@goharzamin.com until 22 July 2023. Also, that company should make the necessary arrangements to hold a meeting with the presence of the senior managers of the mother company (end user) and visiting the relevant plants.

It is obvious that the presentation of these documents does not create any rights for the participants in this announcement, and Gohar Zamin Iron Ore Company is completely authorized in her investigation and responding to the participants.

For more information, you are asked to call 021-57623 Ext. 1673 and Cellphone number 09124604691.

Website: www.goharzamin.com

Will the Jinx of Foreign Investment In Kish Island Be Broken?



Mazyar Haeri Foomani, the CEO of Cupla Industrial Group, regarding the investment of this group on Kish Island and setting up a new production unit, emphasized sabotages in the process of setting up this production unit, and called this island "investor-averse".

Kish Persian Gulf Paper and Plastic Company is the third member of Cupla Industrial Group which was launched in this island with the 30% participation of Kish Investment and Development Company. Haeri emphasized the successful

The jinx of no foreign investment on Kish will be broken because the Supreme Leader's order is to boost production and "We will never allow the general policies of the holy system of the Islamic Republic to be played by a few profit-seekers."

The supervisory and security agencies will be called on to probe the main reasons for Kish's failure in attracting foreign investors.

experience of attracting foreign investment of this industrial group in Anzali Free Zone and also the lack of foreign investment on Kish Island during the past 3 years, and assessed the condition for the entry of capital to this island as very suitable, but the presence of some profiteers in the structure of the Kish Free Zone Organization is contradiction to the advice of the leadership and also the current needs of the Free Zones. He added: "Fourteen months of silence and appeasement are enough, and if the entry of capital to the island is still

accompanied by all kinds of disruptions, the supervisory and security agencies will be called on to probe the main reasons for Kish's failure in attracting foreign investors."

It is worth noting that the Russian investor of this industrial group has announced his full readiness to invest 2 million dollars in the new production unit of this complex and will enter this island on the 10th of August with the official invitation of the CEO of the Persian Gulf Paper and Plastic Company. Haeri Foomani added that Eng. Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Kazem, Mohammad and Ali Haeri Foomani started the journey j35 years ago by investing in the field of production in Kish Island and today it is their task to continue their path on course of growth and pick-up in production but unfortunately the conditions on Kish Island today is very critical and dangerous.

He expressed his hope that the new managing director of the Kish Free Zone Organization would pursue the issues and problems of this island in a jihadi and revolutionary manner. Further, he pointed to the efforts of the board of directors of the investment company and

acknowledged: "The establishment of a production unit with the participation of the domestic private sector and foreign private

sector is an unprecedented issue in the country which shows the unique knowledge and management of the board of directors of Kish Investment Company and especially the CEO of this company, because this structure can be a model for other free zones. He concluded his remarks by saying that even with some disruptions, the issue of foreign investment of Cupla Industrial Group will carried out on Kish Island and the jinx of no foreign investment on Kish will be broken because the Supreme Leader's order is to boost production and "We will never allow the general policies of the holy system of the Islamic Republic to be played by a few profit-seekers."

Nasrallah Pens Letter to Leader of Islamic Revolution

TEHRAN (MNA) – Hezbollah Secretary General Nasrallah thanked the Leader of the Islamic Revolution for sending a message of condolence following the passing of Lebanese scholar Sheikh Afif Al-Nablusi.

In this message, Nasrallah thanked Ayatollah Khamenei for his fatherly love and asked the Almighty God to bless him throughout his life. Earlier on Friday, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah

Seyyed Ali Khamenei extended condolences to Hezbollah Secretary General over the passing of Lebanese scholar Sheikh Afif Al-Nablusi. In this message, Ayatollah Khamenei prayed to the Almighty God to bestow forgiveness and blessing on him.

Sheikh Afif Al-Nablusi was one of the well-known scholars of Lebanon and a prominent supporter of the Islamic resistance against the Zionist regime who passed away on Friday morning after a long illness.

Turning Security Borders Into Economic Borders Iran Strategy

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – The Iranian President says transforming security borders into safe economic borders, as well as the development of border markets and cooperation in the energy sectors is the strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi made the remarks in an interview with Pakistan's Army chief Lt. Gen. Syed Asim Munir on Sunday, saying that strengthening relations with neighboring, aligned, and Muslim countries is one of the priorities of the foreign policy of Iran.

Pointing to the serious will of the two countries to expand relations, he said, "Accelerating the implementation of bilateral agreements will further enhance economic and commercial cooperation between Iran and Pakistan and, as a result, improve the level of political relations between the two neighbors."

Referring to the efforts of the enemies to disrupt the relations of the regional countries, he emphasized strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation by using



existing opportunities and exchanging mutual capacities.

General Munir, for his part, praised the Islamic Republic of Iran's policy of strengthening relations with its neighbors, especially Pakistan, and considered it a very valuable opportunity for the Islamic world.

Good agreements have been reached to increase the level of security at the common borders, he said, adding, "Our efforts are focused on accelerating the ongoing actions to create sustainable security."

Earlier Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and Munir Ahmed Shah had discussed regional issues.

During the meeting held in Tehran on Sunday, the two sides exchanged views on expanding bilateral cooperation.

Asim Munir and his fellow delegate had earlier met with the Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri, Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami, and Commander of Air Force of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi.

Over 7m People Benefit From Welfare Services in Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of the State Welfare Organization of Iran Ali Mohammad Ghaderi has said 2.9 million households benefit from welfare services in Iran and that the total number of people receiving services is 7.5 million.

He made the remarks in a ceremony to commemorate Welfare Week on Saturday, adding that according to international statistics, some 7 to 15 percent of the population of each society is disabled, but 1.8 million households with a disabled member referred to the State Welfare Organization in Iran.

Ghaderi also spoke about providing the disabled with proper housing, noting that the organization plans to provide the disabled with 160,000 housing units so that families with disabled members become self-sufficient.

The official also pointed to the creation of jobs for the target community, saying that the State Welfare Organization is legally obliged to create 65,000 jobs, but in fact, more than 87,000 jobs were created in the last Iranian year (ending on March 20, 2023) and the performance of the organization is 37% above the determined level.

Strengthening Tehran-La Paz Ties Necessary

TEHRAN (MNA) – The Iranian defense minister considered strengthening relations between Iran and Bolivia as a necessity and stressed the need to boost co-operations to counter global arrogance.

Brigadier General Amir Mohammad-Reza Gharaei Ashtiani made the remarks in a meeting with his Bolivian counterpart Edmundo Novillo Aguilar, who is on a visit to

Tehran at the head of a delegation on Sunday morning.

During the meeting, Ashtiani congratulated the Bolivian counterpart on Bolivia's Independence Day, which was achieved after 16 years of struggle for independence.

"Latin America, especially the revolutionary and independent countries in the region, holds a special significance in the foreign and defense policies of Iran," he said.

"Iran's relations with friendly and like-minded countries in Latin America, including Bolivia, are an example of relations between independent countries", he added.

Stating that Iran supports anyone who stands against tyranny, the Iranian minister added "We must stand firm against this hegemonic policy by strengthening our wills and increasing our cooperation."

Referring to the two decades of bilateral diplomatic relations, and political, educational, and defense cooperation, Ashtiani said that these could further develop.

Pointing to the failure of unilateral policies, the Iranian minister continued, "The world is transitioning to a new international system in which a group of independent countries is collaborating with each other to increase their participation in regional and global arenas."

Referring to the common enemies of the two countries, Ashtiani stated that the goal of these enemies is to weaken and overthrow independent governments.

"In this regard, rationality dictates that we remain

vigilant and united in the face of threats" he further said.

Ashtiani expressed readiness to provide for the defense and advanced technology needs to counter threats.

"We believe that strengthening the bilateral defense relations will increase the deterrence power of the Bolivian government," he pointed out.

Edmundo Novillo Aguilar, for his part, stated that nations that strive for their freedom must unite in various ways and forms.

According to the Bolivian minister, this meeting will provide an opportunity to deepen relations for common goals between the two countries. Stating that the Islamic Revolution is a model for Bolivia to achieve the freedom



of nations, he added that despite various sanctions, Iran has succeeded in achieving significant successes in the fields of science and technology, security, and defense.

Iran Slams Western Media's Double Standards On Israelis' Protests

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani has said that the Western media empire deafens the ears of the world with the big lie of defending the freedom of expression and human rights or describes riots, chaos, violence, and destruction as protest and revolution.

Kanaani made the remarks on Sunday in reaction to Western countries' double standards in covering protests in the Occupied Territories.

Protests, strikes, and crippling demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of people in the Occupied Territories have been going on for months and the Zionist security and police forces have been repressing the protesters using the most modern means of violence, but the number of the casualties and arrests have been concealed, he wrote on his Twitter account.

Turning a blind eye to the repression and violence against protestors, as they censor repression of Palestinians, the Western media presents these protests as a symbol of fake democracy in Israel, he added.

This is while the same Western media extensively cover the smallest gathering and protest in a country that is not an ally of the West and deafen the world's ears with the big lie of defending the freedom of speech and human rights, or describe riots, chaos, violence and destruction as protests and revolutions, he stated.

Iran, Russia to Exchange Electricity Through Azerbaijan

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian says that Iran and Russia will exchange electricity through the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Ali Akbar Mehrabian made the remarks in an interview for the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA). "To exchange electricity with Russia, we have followed the two routes of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia-Georgia, and we are in the process of final negotiation and implementation," he said.

The Iranian energy minister added that Iran is seeking to exchange electricity with some neighbors without payment. "Soon we will start exchanging electricity with Russia through Azerbaijan. Connecting to the Russian electricity grid through Armenia and Georgia is also on the agenda," he concluded.

Meanwhile he said Iran would not compromise Helmand's water rights.

Speaking on the sidelines of the unveiling of Iran's water resources monitoring

counter, Mehrabian told reporters that despite consultations about the release of Helmand water, it still needs to be implemented.

Mehrabian said that the Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, was emphasizing the issue (Helmand water right) and requested all officials to pay attention to its implementation.

He pointed to the necessary measures to release the Helmand water right, clarifying the essential step to transfer water from the Tahlab aquifer of Sistan and Baluchestan, southeastern Iran, which can partly supply the province's needs.

He called the water transfer from the Oman Sea to Sistan and Baluchestan, Razavi, and South Khorasan Provinces among the ongoing measures being implemented.

"Due to the increasing water demand, managing water resources is an vital mission that must be taken into account," said Iranian Minister. According to the Afghan-Iranian Helmand River-Water Treaty of 1973, signed by the then officials of Iran and Afghanistan, Iran's share of Helmand River water is 820 million cubic meters per year and about 26 cubic meters per second, which varies in different months and seasons.

Curbs on Car Imports Lifted

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top legislative body has approved a parliament law that allows unlimited imports of brand-new and second-hand cars into the country amid efforts by the government to contain rampant prices of the domestically-produced cars.

In a session held on Saturday, the Guardian Council, the Iranian government body responsible for signing parliament bills into law, endorsed a legislation ratified in June which allowed the government to lift restrictions on imports of cars into Iran.

The legislation is based on a bill submitted by the Iranian government to the parliament in April which asked for removal of bans on car imports to help contain car prices in the country and to respond to soaring demand for cars.

The move comes despite the fact Iran's ministry of industries (MIMT) has introduced various measures to control the car market in Iran, including by offering support to domestic carmakers to help them increase their output.

Iran's total vehicle output reached nearly 1.4 million in the calendar year to late March, nearly double figures reported in the same period to March 2021.

However, the rise failed to have a tangible impact on car prices in Iran which continued to increase consistent with the high levels of inflation in the country.

The MIMT hopes imports of second-hand cars that are under five years of age would accelerate in the future months, especially by individuals rather than companies and from Iran's neighboring countries.

Iran National Standards Organization said on Saturday that it had eased its strict controls on car imports to facilitate transfer of millions of cars into the country.



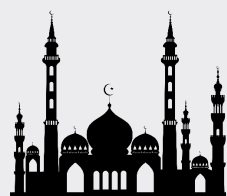
Notice of tender for export sale No. Z/1402/10

Golgohar Mining and Industrial Company

Hereby Golgohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export 70,000 metric tons of Pellet (%Fe:65.00) on basis of F.O.B at Barco Jetty Bandar Abbas - Iran. Interested bidders should find tender documents at Golgohar website: ww.geg.ir. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 14:00 P.M. on 18. Jul.2023 to Golgohar complex in sirjan (50 km in shiraz road).

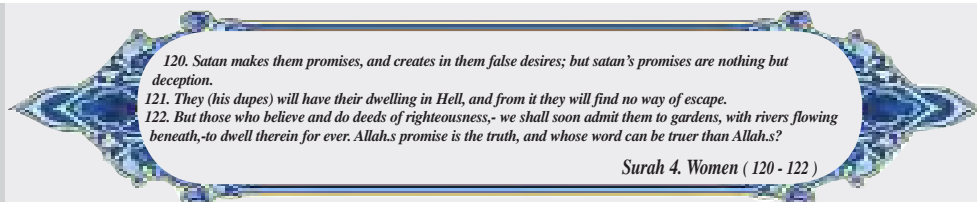
Bidders are invited to the transactions commission department of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 10:00 A.M. on 19.Jul.2023 at the office of the Seller.

Analysis %		
Min	65.00	Fe
Max	1.0	FeO
Max	0.05	P
Max	0.01	S
Max	3.5	SiO2
Max	0.7	Al2O3
Max	0.9	CaO
Max	2.5	MgO
Ave 255		CCS(kg/p)
Min 90		8-16 mm%
Ave5		-6 mm%
Max 3.8		A.1%
Min 95		T.1%
19-24		Prososity%
Min 90		Reducibility%



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	12:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	19:40
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	03:20
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:02



120. Satan makes them promises, and creates in them false desires; but satan's promises are nothing but deception.
 121. They (his dupes) will have their dwelling in Hell, and from it they will find no way of escape.
 122. But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, - we shall soon admit them to gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, - to dwell therein for ever. Allah's promise is the truth, and whose word can be truer than Allah's?
 Surah 4. Women (120 - 122)

Tehran-Europe Trade in Lowest Level for Now

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce says any new agreement in the region and beyond the region will help the economic growth, admitting that currently Iran's trade with Europe is in the lowest level.



Speaking to ILNA, Sharif Nezam Mafi emphasized reducing any kind of political tension is to the benefit of Iran's economy, adding that economic problems in Iran have no economic solutions and most of their look is to the political development. He said that it seems any effort for minimizing the international tension will lead to blossom of the free economy in the country.

He then touched upon the trade ties between Iran and Europe and said that in the current condition the trade between Iran and Europe is in low level, stating that Europeans are waiting for the fate of the JCPOA and observing commitments to have final decision. He went on to say that Iran's grain exchange with Ukraine has not been in a level so that it can have its impact on Iran's grain trade, of course European companies in trade of this product with Iran have had roles but actually Europeans have not been major grain deals because trade of grain is very complicated.

He also noted that any agreement on the JCPOA will be temporary and added that experience has shown us that if the JCPOA is agreed based on the previous formula we cannot pin hopes on it and there is a possibility that with return of extremist administration like Trump we may see the unilateral exit of the U.S. from the agreement and Iran should take advantage of the remaining days of the current U.S. administration.

Nezam Mafi added that the issue of the FATF will soon be resolved because FATF is the engine of economy and global exchanges and sooner or later Iran will realize it.

He reiterated that in the last days of the current month the chamber will hold conference on grain in Iran with the presence of all major actors of this trade.

He once again reiterated détente and reducing tension will not lead to flood of foreign investment into the country in short term because investors seek a stable and peaceful place as we know that capital will go to a quiet and safe place and it will not go to a place with an unknown future and resolving the JCPOA issue and regional problems will help the economy.

Int'l Conf. on Steelmaking And Continuous Casting to Be Held in February

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - The manager of the public relations of Hormozgan Steel Company (HOSCO) says the 3rd International Conference on Steelmaking and Continuous Casting (ISCC) will be held in Banda Abbas in February 2024.

Reza Safarian in an interview said that after gaining valuable experiences through holding two editions of conferences on steelmaking and continuous casting by HOSCO in the past years, the company is to host the third edition in Bandar Abbas with presence of steelmakers, academics and knowledge-based companies.

He said that the goal behind holding this conference in the past years was to restore effective relation between steel industry and academics and universities as well as sharing knowledge-based experiences in the field of steelmaking and continuous vesting.

Safarian further said that definitely using industrial experiences and ideas of the knowledge-based companies and elites in the steelmaking and continuous casting will boost steel production in the country. He reiterated that HOSCO with employing these ideas in the recent three years has been able to resolve some challenges in the field of steelmaking and registering successive records.

He stated that HOSCO in line with its social responsibility task has been one of the leaders in supporting research and knowledge-based centers and therefore the third international conference on steelmaking and continuous casting will help all to share their experiences for resolving challenges in the steelmaking and continuous casting.

Safarian concluded his remarks by saying that Hormozgan Steel Company is ready for participation of all activists, academics, elites and industrialists in the steelmaking unit and invited all experts and researchers in this industry to send their ideas and designs to the secretariat of the conference.

Grains Storage Rose 5.9% in 2022

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) says Iran's grains storage rose by nearly 6% last year despite pressures on the global grains supplies because of the war in Ukraine and in spite of U.S. sanctions that restricts Iran's normal access to global grains markets.

Excerpts of FAO's latest global food outlook report published in local Iranian news agencies on Saturday showed that Iran's grains storage capacity had reached 12.5 million metric tons (mt) last year, up by 5.93% from 2021.

It said Iran was responsible for 1.5% of the total grains supply in the world in 2022, adding that the country had the world's eighth largest grains supplies last year.

That comes as grains storage in Egypt, a country with a population larger than Iran, was around 4.3 million mt last year, according to the findings of the report.

Iran's total grains output in 2022 reached 20.6 million mt of which some 13 million mt was wheat, said FAO as it expected that Iran's wheat production would increase to 13.5 million mt this year.

The UN food agency expected that Iran's rice output would drop by half a million mt to

3 million mt in 2023 while its supply of other grains would remain flat at 4.1 million mt. The figures come as Iran is still under a harsh regime of American sanctions that hamper its access to normal trade of grains in the international markets.

It also comes despite the fact that the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has negatively impacted the global supply of grains and left many countries struggling with shortages.

Tire Output Crosses 6m in Q1

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Iranian domestic tire manufacturing companies produced 65,353 tons of tires in the first quarter of the current fiscal year (March 21-June 21), IRNA reported.

The figure registered a 4% increase compared with the corresponding period of last year.

A total of 6.14 million tires (including different kinds of bias and radial passenger tires, as well as pickup, bus, agriculture, road construction and industrial tires), were produced during the period.

By the end of the first quarter, 41,140 tons of passenger car tires (bias and radial) were produced, showing a 5% increase YOY and accounting for 63% of the tire manufacturers' total output.

Statistics indicate that only 19 tons of bias passenger tires were produced during the period, down 99.95% compared with 41,121 tons in the same period of last year.

A total of 5,952 tons of pickup truck tires (bias and radial) were produced in Q1, indicating a 6% YOY growth.

The output of bias pickup truck tires declined by 13% YOY while that of radial pickup truck tires increased by 108% compared with the corresponding period of last year.

A total of 12,506 tons of heavy-duty truck and bus tires were produced, registering a 3% increase YOY.

The production of bias tires for commercial trucks and buses declined by 10% year-on-year. This is while the output of radial tires for these vehicles grew by 13% YOY.

Statistics show a sharp decline in the share of bias tires in all fields, as they have lost favor due to the old technology used in their production.

Iran Targets \$3b in Annual Trade With Africa by 2025

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The government of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi aims to reach a minimum of \$3 billion in annual trade with Africa by 2025, says an Iranian official.

Alireza Peyman-Pak, the deputy minister of Agriculture Jihad and former head of the Trade Promotion Organization, made the remarks in an interview with the Iran Economy newspaper, which was published on Saturday.

He discussed President Raisi's recent visits to Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, and said the visit to Africa--the first of its kind by an Iranian president in 11 years -- will have a positive impact on bilateral relations, especially on economic ties.

Peyman-Pak noted that in previous governments, Iran's trade volume with Africa was less than \$500 million, but the Raisi administration has successfully increased it to \$1.2 billion.

President Raisi's recent visit to Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe marks the beginning of a new phase of economic and trade cooperation between Iran and Africa, the official said.

The potential for collaboration in various sectors -- particularly in petrochemicals, construction, healthcare, tourism, raw materials, and agricultural products--presents opportunities for the private sector to benefit from Africa's resources and contribute to Iran's economic growth, he noted.

Regarding President Raisi's visit to Kenya, Peyman-Pak underscored the country's strategic position as the gateway to East Africa and its bustling port of Mombasa, saying efforts have been made to establish regular shipping routes between Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas and Mombasa.

Raisi's discussions also focused on enhancing agricultural cooperation and promoting exports of petrochemical products and bitumen from Iran to Kenya, he added.

Peyman-Pak noted that agriculture was a dominant topic during the president's visit to Uganda due to the country's abundant water resources.

By utilizing Uganda's capacity for extra-territorial cultivation, Iran can import agricultural products more efficiently and at better prices, thereby ensuring food security, he said.

In the case of Zimbabwe, Peyman-Pak highlighted its substantial mineral resources and the potential for collaboration. During the president's visit, agreements were reached in the mining sector, he added.

Additionally, a memorandum of understanding was signed in the field of tractor assembly, with the necessary infrastructure in place, the deputy minister said.

Brief Notice of International Two-Stage Enquiry No 145792

It is hereby notified that Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) intends to purchase **780 ton Graphite Electrode with Nipple** as per the required conditions and technical specifications through two-stage international Enquiry. Accordingly, all the prospective bidders are kindly requested to visit ESCO's website www.esfahansteel.ir so as to obtain the tender document no later than **22.07.2023** and upload their techno-commercial offer to ESCO's website (through Sourcing Field) max. up to **22.07.2023 at 23:00 p.m**

It is evident that this letter is only for notification purpose

Yours Respectfully
S.J.Rafiei
Refractory Materials Purchasing Management
Esfahan Steel Company

NICICO Planning to Increase Annual Revenues to \$10b

TEHRAN (MNA) - The managing director of National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) has said the company is following a new program to increase its annual revenues to \$10 billion, IRIB reported.

Ali Rostami made the remarks in a meeting with the newly appointed acting head of the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) Mohammadreza Movasaghi-Nejad.

According to Rostami, based on the mentioned program, the country's production capacity is going to increase by threefold and more than 50,000 people will be working in the industry.

Back in March, Rostami said the country's copper production is going to reach one million tons in the next six years.

He noted that in case of reaching the above-mentioned output, the country's copper export is also going to hit \$10 billion.

According to Rostami, NICICO managed to export \$1.6 billion worth of copper products in the Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20, 2022).

Iran saw its copper exports double in that year despite a series of bitter sanctions imposed by the United States aimed at hampering the Islamic Republic's trade of lucrative metals.

Rahul Gandhi Appeals To India's Top Court

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Top Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi appealed to the country's highest court over his conviction for defamation, one of his lawyers said, days after a lower court refused to intervene.

Gandhi was sentenced to two years' jail for comments he made in 2019 which a court ruled were insulting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and those sharing his last name.

That made him ineligible to remain a member of parliament, or to stand in next year's election.

Modi's government has been widely accused of using the defamation law to silence critics.



Tajani Succeeds Berlusconi As Forza Italia Chief

ROME (Dispatches) - Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani was elected as leader of Forza Italia, the conservative party founded 29 years ago by billionaire media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi who died last month.

Tajani, 69, who was chosen unanimously by Forza Italia's national council, faces a hard task reviving the fortunes of a party whose public support had been dwindling for years even before Berlusconi's death.

Tajani has spent much of his career outside Italy, serving as a European Commissioner in Brussels and as president of the European Parliament. He lacks his predecessor's charisma and is not among Italy's more popular politicians.



Azerbaijan, Armenia Hold Brussels Talks



BAKU (Dispatches) - Azerbaijan and Armenia held a fresh round of EU-mediated peace talks, while Russia offered a summit in Moscow in an effort to reassert a lead role in the normalization process.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met in Brussels for talks aimed at resolving their decades-long conflict for the control of Armenian-populated Karabakh, the foreign ministry in Baku said in a statement.

European Council President Charles Michel was mediating the discussions, which come amid renewed tensions after Azerbaijan closed temporarily the Lachin corridor, the sole land link between Karabakh and Armenia.

Baku and Yerevan have been seeking to negotiate a peace agreement with the help of the European Union and United States, whose diplomatic engagement in the Caucasus has irked traditional regional power broker Russia.

Moscow on Saturday offered to host the two countries' foreign ministers and suggested the future peace treaty could be signed in Moscow.

Russia is ready "to organize a trilateral meeting of the foreign ministers in Moscow in the near future," the country's foreign ministry said in a statement.

It offered to hold later a "Russian-Azerbaijani-Armenian summit in Moscow to sign the relevant (peace) treaty." Adding to the recent standoff with Yerevan, Azerbaijan's defense ministry said Armenian separatist forces in Karabakh "use radio interference against GPS navigation systems of local and foreign airlines' passenger aircraft flying through our country's airspace."

The alleged interference impacted two Azerbaijan Airlines aircraft on Thursday, the ministry said.

"Such incidents pose a serious threat to aviation safety," according to the statement.

Karabakh's rebel authorities denied the claims, calling them an "absolute lie."

On Friday, some 6,000 people rallied in Karabakh to demand the reopening of the Lachin corridor.

Local separatists, warning of a humanitarian crisis, urged Moscow to ensure free movement through the road.

Azerbaijan later allowed the Red Cross to resume medical evacuations from Karabakh to Armenia.

Karabakh has been at the center of a decades-long territorial dispute between the two countries, which have fought two wars over the mountainous territory, mainly populated by Armenians.

During previous rounds of Western-mediated talks, Baku and Yerevan have made some progress towards preparing the text of a peace agreement, but its signature remains a distant prospect.

Yerevan agreed to recognise Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan, but demanded international mechanisms for protecting the rights and security of the region's ethnic-Armenian population.

Baku insists such guarantees must be provided at the national level, rejecting any international format.

In autumn 2020, Russia sponsored a ceasefire agreement that ended six weeks of fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces for control of Karabakh.

The deal saw Armenia cede swathes of territories it had controlled for decades, while Russia deployed peacekeepers which are manning the five-kilometre-wide Lachin Corridor to ensure free passage between Armenia and Karabakh.

Pena Says Taiwan Ties Make More Sense Than China

ASUNCION (Dispatches) - Paraguay's formal ties with Taiwan make "more sense" than recognizing China, and will be a greater boost to development in the South American nation, president-elect Santiago Pena said.

Paraguay is the last remaining South American nation to recognize Taiwan over Beijing, which claims the island as its territory and has spent decades convincing Taipei's allies to switch.

Pena, who was elected in late April and will be inaugurated next month, has been in Taiwan since Tuesday and his schedule has been packed with meetings and stops, including at a bubble tea shop with the island's President Tsai Ing-wen.

He has vowed to stay on Taiwan's side during his five-year tenure, a point he reiterated during an interview with AFP and other media on Saturday.

"There are solid foundations and concrete facts that support why it makes more sense to have a relationship with Taiwan than with mainland China," he said.

Despite formally recognizing Taiwan, Pena said there are "no constraints" to trade with China, with which Paraguay has "a very broad relationship" -- China is Paraguay's top supplier of goods.

"But for a country like Paraguay -- small and a very open economy -- we need to diversify our markets," he said.

Paraguay cannot depend on a single market because its "capacity of negotiation" is not the same as larger countries such as the United States and neighboring Brazil, which counts China as its largest export market, he said.

"Reliance on a single market for some moments will be very good, but in other moments would be very, very bad."

The former finance minister had vowed on the campaign trail to maintain formal ties with Taiwan.

His win in May soothed Taipei's fear that Paraguay would ditch it in favor of Beijing.

Panama, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Honduras have all switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in recent years.



French Authorities Ban Protest Against Police Violence in Paris

PARIS (Dispatches) - French authorities confirmed that a protest against police violence set to take place in Paris could not go ahead due to police shortages. NGOs say the ban signals a "more and more repressive" approach from authorities.

Judges from Paris's administrative court at midday on Saturday rejected an appeal brought by a national organisation against police violence (la Coordination nationale contre les violences policières) to allow Saturday's demonstration to go ahead at Place de la République in the French capital from 3:00pm.

The ruling followed an announcement from Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin on Wednesday banning any demonstrations up to July 15 "directly linked to the riots" that followed the death of 17-year-old Nahel M., who was shot and killed by police on June 27 in the Paris suburb of Nanterre following a police traffic stop.

France was wracked by almost a week of violent demonstrations against police violence after the teenager was killed.

Paris Police Chief Laurent Nunez had said on Thursday that Saturday's protest could not go ahead due to a risk of "disturbance to public order". Nunez cited a lack of police available to ensure security at the event, after security forces were "strongly mobilized" during the riots and France's annual July 14 Bastille Day celebrations.

NGOs, unions and left-wing parties reacted to the ban with anger.

"The police headquarters supported by judges from Paris's administrative court are blocking all channels for the democratic expression of perfectly legitimate demands," said Lucie Simon, a lawyer representing the organisers of Saturday's protest. Following the court's ruling, the organisers cancelled the event hours before it was scheduled to go ahead.

Around 15 law enforcement vehicles were still present at Place de la République in anticipation of demonstrators, AFP journalists reported.

Pierre Brunisso, from French NGO the Human Rights League, said the situation in France was becoming "more and more repressive" with protesters increasingly feeling they need to be granted "permission" to demonstrate from the police prefecture.

Sudan Army Returns to Talks in Saudi

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Sudanese army representatives have returned to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia for talks with their paramilitary foes, a government source said as the war between rival generals entered its fourth month.

"A delegation of the armed forces has returned to Jeddah to resume negotiations with Rapid Support Forces (RSF) rebels," the source told AFP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to media.

The RSF has made no comment on returning to the talks in Jeddah, which Saudi and US mediators adjourned last month after a series of repeatedly violated ceasefires.

On April 15, a power struggle between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, burst into all-out war, claiming at least 3,000 lives and displacing more than three million people.

The delegation in Saudi Arabia signals a return to diplomatic efforts by the army, after it boycotted talks last week in Ethiopia hosted by east African regional bloc IGAD.

Khartoum's foreign ministry had objected to Kenyan President William Ruto's leadership of the IGAD quartet, accusing Nairobi of siding with the RSF.

Before the Jeddah talks were suspended, US mediators had grown increasingly frustrated with both sides' reluctance to work towards a sustained truce.

Experts believe that both Burhan and Daglo have opted for a war of attrition instead, hoping to extract greater concessions at the negotiating table later.

For three months, barely a day has passed for residents of the capital Khartoum without their homes shaking from constant air strikes, artillery blasts and gun battles.

To escape the brutal urban warfare and rampant looting, 1.7 million people have fled the capital, according to the United Nations.

Millions remain in the city, sheltering at home as the violence shows no signs of abating.

Witnesses again reported "clashes using various types of weapons" in the capital's northwest on Saturday as well as air strikes from army fighter jets in the south.

Others said RSF drones had targeted Khartoum's largest military hospital, in an attack the army said killed "five patients" and injured 22 others, "mostly civilians".

The UN has said that most hospitals in combat zones were out of service.

Outside Khartoum, the worst fighting has taken place in the western region of Darfur, where a quarter of Sudan's 48 million people live.

Entire villages and neighbourhoods there have been destroyed, with reports of mass civilian deaths and assassinations of officials for their ethnic background, blamed on the RSF and allied Arab militias.



Zelenskiy Warns of Russian Efforts to Halt Kyiv's Troops

KYIV (Dispatches) - President Volodymyr Zelenskiy warned Ukrainians that Russia was throwing all its resources into a campaign to stop Kyiv's troops from pressing their counter offensive and a top general reported new progress on the southern front.

But Ukrainian military analysts suggested that things were not easy for Ukrainian forces in their bid to advance southward.

Ukraine has launched a counter offensive to take back swathes of land in eastern and southern Ukraine captured by Russian forces in their invasion launched in February 2022.

It has focused on capturing villages in the southeast in a drive towards the Sea of Azov and areas near the eastern city of Bakhmut, taken by Russian forces in May after months of battles.

Russian accounts said its forces had repelled Ukrainian attacks in eastern Donetsk region, including around Bakhmut.

"We must all understand very clearly, as clearly as possible, that Russian forces in our southern and eastern lands are doing everything they can in order to stop our soldiers," Zelenskiy said in his nightly video address after chairing a meeting with top commanders on Friday.

"And every thousand meters we advance, every success of every combat brigade deserves our gratitude."

Reuters was unable to verify battlefield reports.

General Oleksander Tarnavskiy, commander of Ukrainian forces in the south, said after the meeting that his troops were "systematically moving the enemy out of their positions".

Enemy losses over the past 24 hours were equivalent to at least 200, he wrote on Telegram.

"In the south, the situation is very difficult in advancing towards Berdiansk," military analyst Serhiy Hrabyskiy told Ukrainian NV radio, referring to a port on the Sea of Azov. Ukrainian forces hope to cut off a land bridge Russian forces have established with the annexed Crimean peninsula.

"They are moving on the village of Robotyne. The enemy is offering resistance to stop our advance southward."

Russia's Defense Ministry, in its daily report, said its forces had repelled 16 Ukrainian attacks on the eastern front, including near the long-contested town of Maryinka and in the strategic village of Klishchiivka, on Bakhmut's southern fringe.

AI Tool Could Aid Diagnosis, Treatment of Brain Tumors

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Scientists have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) tool capable of deciphering a brain tumor's genetic code in real time, during surgery -- an advance they say could speed diagnosis and personalize patients' treatment.

The researchers trained the AI tool to recognize the different genetic features of gliomas, a group of tumors that constitute the most common form of brain cancer among adults.

Not all gliomas are the same, however. Most people are diagnosed with one of three subtypes that each have different genetic features -- and, critically, different degrees of aggressiveness and treatment options.

Right now, doctors called pathologists can analyze gliomas for those genetic markers, in what's known as molecular diagnosis. But the process takes days to weeks, said Dr. Kun-Hsing Yu, the senior researcher on the new study.

In contrast, the AI tool his team is developing can enable molecular diagnosis in 10 to 15 minutes. That means it could be done during surgery, according to Yu, an assistant professor of biomedical informatics at Harvard Medical School, in Boston.

The technology, called CHARM, also appears high on the accuracy scale. When Yu's team put it to the test with glioma samples it had never "seen" before, the AI tool was 93% accurate in distinguishing the three different molecular subtypes.

Being able to make such distinctions in the operating room is critical, Yu and other experts said, because it could change how a patient is treated.

Some gliomas are less aggressive, and surgeons can be more conservative in removing brain tissue -- which can minimize side effects.

Other gliomas, such as glioblastoma, are highly aggressive. So surgeons will try to remove as much of the cancer as possible, and sometimes implant "wafers" of slowly released chemotherapy drugs directly into the brain.

"This breakthrough technology has the potential to guide surgical decisions by providing real-time molecular diagnosis during brain tumor surgeries," said Atique Ahmed, an associate professor of neurological surgery at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago.

Ahmed, who was not involved in the study, called the tool's 93% accuracy "impressive," but noted that it can be improved.



"It's important to remember that the 7% inaccuracy is not just a number," he said. "It represents patients with very aggressive diseases who could benefit greatly from more precise diagnoses."

Yu agreed that the performance can be further refined, and CHARM is not yet ready for prime time. It has to be tested in real-world settings, he said, and cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The researchers are working with several hospitals in different areas of the world to put CHARM to that real-world test.

Interest in using AI in medical diagnoses has exploded in recent years. The hope is that AI algorithms will assist specialists in analyzing images -- from mammograms or CT scans, for example -- to get a faster, more accurate verdict.

No one wants to replace doctors, Yu stressed. "We want to use AI as a tool."

CHARM is a much more memorable acronym for Cryosection Histopathology Assessment and Review Machine. Yu's team developed the tool using more than 2,300 frozen tumor samples from 1,524 patients treated for glioma at various U.S. hospitals.

The work, described online recently in the journal Med, is not the only effort to improve glioma diagnosis using AI.

Other tools are under study, including one called DeepGlioma. Dr. Daniel Orringer, a neurosurgeon at NYU Langone's Perlmutter Cancer Center in New York City, is one of the researchers on that project.

He said that right now, molecular diagnosis of glioma is not only time-consuming and expensive, but not available at all hospitals where patients are treated. AI has the potential to "democratize molecular testing," Orringer said.

CHARM, he said, is "particularly attractive" in that regard, because it could ultimately be used at any hospital that has the capacity to digitize histology slides (microscopic images of patients' tumor samples).

Study Finds Deer Spread COVID-19 Back to Humans

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A new study has found cases of COVID-19 spreading from deer to humans, and back, multiple times.

The study, published in the scientific journal Nature, revealed samples taken from deer showed mutated variants of COVID-19 spreading to humans, after humans spread the virus to deer.

Of the 8,830 respiratory samples taken from free-ranging white-tailed deer in 26 states and Washington, D.C., between November 2021 and April 2022, researchers found 282 deer were infected with COVID-19.

The scientists, including some from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Agriculture, found that in at least 109 cases humans had spread the virus to the deer.

Additionally, there were at least 39 cases of deer-to-deer transmission and, more notably, three cases of deer-to-human transmission.

While researchers were able to track down the three people infected with COVID-19, none had reported being near deer prior to getting infected.

White-tailed deer are common in urban and rural areas throughout the country with an estimated population of 30 million, according to the study, which concluded that frequent introductions of new human viruses into white-tailed deer continue to occur.

While COVID-19 variants Alpha, Gamma and Delta were no longer circulating among humans as late as February, the variants continued to spread in white-tailed deer.

Researchers say other viruses can continue to persist in the deer population even after the variants have become rare in humans and are now calling for large-scale surveillance of white-tailed deer to determine whether the animal could be a potential reservoir for COVID-19 and how the mammal may have played a role in the ecology of the virus.

In separate research released Monday, scientists announced a new all-species test to detect the COVID-19 virus in any animal.

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, has been detected in cats, dogs, rodents, deer and apes, among others, and can mutate leading to new variants.

The new test, supported by research and the U.S. National Institutes of Health, could help scientists keep track of animal populations and prevent future viral outbreaks.



Musk Launches xAI to Rival OpenAI, Google



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Elon Musk yesterday launched his own artificial intelligence company, xAI, as he seeks to compete with OpenAI, the creator of ChatGPT -- a program he accuses of being politically biased and irresponsible.

The xAI website said the Tesla tycoon would run the company separately from his other companies but that the technology developed would benefit those businesses, including Twitter.

"The goal of xAI is to understand the true nature of the universe," the website said.

Musk on Twitter added that the new company's aim was to "understand reality" and answer life's biggest questions.

The startup is staffed by former researchers from OpenAI, Google DeepMind, Tesla and the University of Toronto.

The team is to be advised by Dan Hendrycks, who currently leads the Center for AI Safety, a San Francisco-based organization that warns against developing AI too quickly.

Hendrycks also initiated the open letter to global leaders in June that warned AI was a risk to human existence on par with pandemics and nuclear war.

Musk has repeatedly warned about the dangers of AI, having called it "our biggest existential threat," and saying that moving too fast was like "summoning the demon."

He has claimed to have cofounded OpenAI in 2015 because he regarded the dash by Google to make advances in artificial intelligence as reckless.

He left OpenAI in 2018 to focus on Tesla and later said he was also uncomfortable with the profit-driven direction the company was taking under the stewardship of CEO Sam Altman.

Produce Prescriptions Could Improve Health of People With Diabetes

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - A bunch of healthy fruits and vegetables could be just what the doctor ordered.

Nonprofit groups and public health agencies have experimented with the idea of a produce prescription over the years. Now, a new study simulates what would happen if patients with diabetes and diet-related conditions were given free or discounted produce and nutrition education nationwide.

The researchers, from the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University in Boston, report it could have significant health benefits and save billions of dollars in healthcare costs.

"Of the strategies that can improve American's nutrition and diet-related health outcomes, evidence continues to build that produce prescriptions are a terrific option," said senior author Dr. Dariush Mozaffarian, a cardiologist and professor of nutrition, who is also launching an initiative dubbed Food is Medicine.

"These innovative treatments are exciting because they cannot only improve health and reduce healthcare spending, but also reduce disparities by reaching those patients who are most in need," he said in a university news release.

The simulation predicted both clinical and financial benefits from making fruits and vegetables more accessible to food-insecure diabetic patients, including a savings of at least \$40 billion in medical bills because of nationwide reductions in heart disease.

Typically, produce prescription programs allow a patient with a diet-related health condition to get vouchers or electronic cards for free or discounted fruits and vegetables that would be delivered to the patient's home or picked up from a grocery store or farmer's market.

The long-term benefits of this idea had not previously been investigated, according to this

study. This study estimated that a national produce prescription program for 40- to 79-year-olds with diabetes and food insecurity could prevent 296,000 cases of cardiovascular disease, such as heart attacks and stroke.

In addition to saving nearly \$40 billion in healthcare spending, the strategy could also save \$4.8 billion in lost productivity costs.

"When we looked at different subgroups of Americans, we found broadly similar benefits by insurance type, race and ethnicity," said first author Lu Wang, a postdoctoral fellow at the Friedman

School. "These results suggest that a national produce prescription initiative could benefit all Americans, highlighting the potential of Food is Medicine strategies to alleviate health inequities caused by food and nutrition insecurity and diet-related diseases."

The Friedman School team pooled studies of 20 smaller-scale initiatives and nationally representative datasets to run the simulation. It assumed that all American adults ages 40 to 79 who are living with diabetes and food insecurity would increase their fruit and vegetable consumption by an average of 0.8 servings per day. That's about equal to one small apple. It also presumed expected reductions to their blood pressure and body mass index (a measure of body fat based on height and weight).

"A national program could be enacted through inclusion of produce prescriptions as a covered healthcare benefit, already being piloted by several states under Medicaid section 1115 waivers as well as by private healthcare payers," Mozaffarian said. "Our new findings help inform implementation to scale and evaluate these programs across the United States."



Mindfulness Classes Linked To Reduced Stress, Anxiety



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The centuries-old practice of mindfulness is having a moment in present times, and a new study finds the therapy can improve mental health for at least six months.

Analyzing the results of 13 prior studies, U.K. researchers concluded that in-person, teacher-led mindfulness courses were tied to reduced stress and anxiety. Mindfulness "was the seventh step of the Noble Eightfold Path in Buddhism many thousands of years ago. And lots of different cultures have used different variations of this," said Dr. Yvette Sheline, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral research at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia.

There are many cited benefits of mindfulness, which is defined by UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center as "maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens."

Mindfulness training is offered in over 600 companies globally, and 79% of U.S. medical schools, according to background notes with the new study. And it's estimated that at least 5% of U.S. adults have practiced mindfulness.

"Although there has been previous research on the topic, this is the largest and most reliable study so far confirming that these courses work for the average person," said study co-author Julieta Galante, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Cambridge, in England. For the study, Cambridge researchers pooled and analyzed data from 2,371 adults who participated in trial mindfulness-based programs. Around half were in programs that lasted for eight weeks, with one session a week. The rest did not participate in the mindfulness programs (the "control" group).

EU Ministers Back More Ukraine Aid

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) - European Union finance ministers on Friday unanimously backed extra funds for Ukraine through a top-up of its long-term budget, although differences persisted over other spending that threaten to delay or block proposed aid to Kyiv.

Spanish Finance Minister Nadia Calvino told a news conference that EU finance ministers meeting on Friday had backed continued financial support for Ukraine.

"The Spanish presidency is committed to proceed swiftly to have a stable framework in place by January 2024," she said. Calvino added that more technical work would be needed to support Ukraine, whose economy has been damaged by Russia's invasion.



IMF Sees Pockets of Resilience, Slowing Momentum in Global Economy

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund said that first quarter global growth slightly outpaced projections in its April forecasts, but data since then has shown a mixed picture, with "pockets of resilience" alongside signs of slowing momentum.

The IMF said in a briefing note for a G20 finance leaders meeting in India next week that manufacturing is showing weakness across G20 economies and global trade remains weak, but the demand for services is strong, particularly where tourism is recovering.

The IMF did not indicate any changes to its April 2023 global GDP growth forecast of 2.8% - down from 3.4% in 2022 - but said that risks were "mostly" tilted to the downside. These include the potential for Russia's war in Ukraine to intensify, stubborn inflation and more financial sector stress that could disrupt markets. But the Fund said that inflation "seems to have peaked" in 2022, and core inflation, while also easing, remains above targets in most G20 countries.

Reduced supply chain disruptions and lower goods demand means likely disinflationary pressures from goods, the IMF said.

"However, services inflation - which is now the major driver of core inflation - is expected to take longer to decline," the IMF said.

But it said that it was possible for inflation to fall faster than anticipated with resilient output and labor markets, with cooling demand translating into fewer job vacancies rather than higher unemployment.

IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack told reporters that U.S. data showing that June consumer prices registered their smallest annual increase in two years was a "very welcome" reduction in inflation momentum, but core inflation, particularly for services, was not yet on a downward trajectory.

G20 policymakers should continue their fight against inflation, tightening monetary policy in many economies and maintaining real rates above neutral until "tangible signs of inflation returning to target emerge." But the IMF said policymakers will need to be vigilant for signs of financial sector stress, especially those brought about by interest rate risk and property sector stresses, and may need to deploy financial policy tools to contain them. It called for "granular stress tests" for financial firms.

G20 countries also need to tighten fiscal policy to ensure debt sustainability, create fiscal space and to help support disinflation by reducing aggregate demand, the Fund said. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said in an accompanying blog post that her "overriding priority" was to complete a review of the IMF's quota resources that would increase their overall size, "with mindfulness of how the global economy has evolved", a signal that major emerging markets like China should see increased shareholding.

The Fund last adjusted its shareholding in 2010, and is working to complete a review by Dec. 15. Georgieva also said IMF members must fully replenish IMF trust funds that provide concessional resources for vulnerable countries.

The IMF also warned G20 countries about the dangers that industrial policy can have in creating distortions in trade and investment, citing China's industrial subsidies and those for green energy investment in the United States and the European Union.

U.S. Inflation Outlook Brightening

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. import prices fell for a second straight month in June as an increase in the cost of fuels was more than offset by declines elsewhere, the latest indication that inflationary pressures in the economy are abating.

With the inflation environment improving considerably, Americans are growing more optimistic about the economic outlook. Consumer sentiment vaulted to the highest level in nearly two years in July, other data showed.

The disinflationary trend has raised cautious optimism that the economy could avoid a recession this year. Economists also believe an expected interest rate hike from the Federal Reserve later this month would be the last in the U.S. central bank's fastest monetary policy tightening cycle since the 1980s.

The Fed, which has hiked its benchmark overnight interest rate by 500 basis points since March 2022, skipped a rate hike at its policy meeting last month.

"The inflation pipeline is clearing up," said Jeffrey Roach, chief economist at LPL Financial in Charlotte, North Carolina. "Investors should expect the Fed in the upcoming meeting to acknowledge the continued improvement in pricing dynamics across the domestic economy."

Import prices dropped 0.2% last month. Data for May was revised to show import prices declining 0.4% instead of the previously reported 0.6%. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast import prices, which exclude tariffs, would dip 0.1%.

In the 12 months through June, import prices tumbled 6.1%. That was the biggest year-on-year decline since May 2020 and followed a 5.7% drop in May.

Annual import prices have now decreased for five straight months. The government reported this week that consumer and producer prices rose moderately in June.

Though consumer inflation remains above the Fed's 2% target, the pace of increase has slowed sharply since peaking in June 2022, giving consumers some relief.

A separate report from the University of Michigan on Friday showed its consumer sentiment index jumped 12.7% to 72.6 this month, the highest reading since September 2021. Economists had forecast a preliminary reading of 65.5.

Joanne Hsu, the director of the University of Michigan's Surveys of Consumers, attributed the surge in sentiment "to the continued slowdown in inflation along with stability in labor markets."



China Invites Global Investors For Rare Meeting As Economy Sputters

HONG KONG (Reuters) - China's financial regulators have invited some of the world's biggest investors to a rare symposium next week, three sources said, seeking to encourage foreigners to keep investing in the world's second-largest economy despite its recent weakness and rising geopolitical tensions.

The meeting in Beijing next Friday will focus on the current conditions of U.S. dollar-denominated investment firms in China and the main challenges facing them, according to the sources who have direct knowledge of the matter and invitation documents reviewed by Reuters.

The gathering comes at a time when global investors and banks are warning that confidence is waning in China's economic outlook. The country's post-pandemic recovery is quickly losing steam and Sino-U.S. relations are at a low over national security issues -- including Taiwan, U.S. export bans on advanced technologies and China's state-led industrial policies.

Such a meeting, with a clear agenda to discuss challenges facing global fund managers investing in China, is rare, the three sources said, and reflected Beijing's keenness to shore up confidence among foreign investors.

Large foreign and domestic fund managers such as private equity (PE) firms, known as general partners (GPs), and their investors or limited partners (LPs) including sovereign wealth funds and pension funds are expected to join the meeting, said the sources.

They also will be encouraged to provide suggestions to help address challenges facing their businesses in China and share their outlook on the economy, according to the sources and documents.

The global funds which will attend will likely send their China-based senior staff, though some senior executives will be flying to China for the talks, the sources added.

All three sources spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak with the media.

Weighed down by strict COVID measures, China's economy grew just 3% in 2022, one of its worst showings in decades. Activity rebounded early this year after the curbs were abruptly lifted, but momentum has faded sharply since, while policy uncertainty and tensions between China, the U.S. and other Western powers have heightened.

The meeting also comes as some PE firms and their investors have been rethinking their China strategies after a years-long, bruising crackdown on private enterprises such as tech companies, which has cast a long shadow over PE investors' return prospects and narrowed investment opportunities, separate sources have told Reuters.

Canada's No. 3 pension fund - Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) said in January it was pausing future direct investments in private assets in China.

One in Four UK Single Parent Households Unable to Afford Food



LONDON (Dispatches) - More than a quarter of Britain's single parent households have recently run out of food and been unable to afford more, according to a survey from the country's statistics agency which highlights the impact of surging inflation.

Out of nearly 15,000 households surveyed between Feb. 8 and May 1, 5% said they had run out of food in the previous two weeks and been unable to buy more, rising to 28% for households with a single parent and at least one child.

Consumer price inflation hit a 41-year peak of 11.1% in October 2022, and food price inflation reached its highest since 1977 in March at more than 19%.

British supermarkets say prices are now beginning to come down, although figures from the British Retail Consortium trade body showed that prices in June were still nearly 15% greater than a year earlier.

The Office for National Statistics will release its June inflation data on Wednesday.

Britain's main welfare benefits rose by 10.1% in April and the government provided extra support for energy bills.

Despite this, 21% of benefit recipients still reported running out of money for food, the ONS said.

Pressures are greatest for larger families, as support payments since 2017 have been limited to a maximum of two children per household, with limited exceptions.

The ONS survey also showed that people renting their homes were generally under greater financial pressure than homeowners with mortgages. Forty-three percent of renters said it was very or somewhat difficult to afford their rent, compared with 28% of people with mortgages.

Bank of England interest rates have increased to 5% from 0.1% in December 2021 and are expected to rise further, prompting the government to request lenders give mortgage-holders in arrears up to a year before repossessing their homes.

UN Agency Calls for Debt Pause Option as Poverty Rates Rise

GENEVA (Dispatches) - A United Nations agency urged global finance ministers to give poor countries debt repayment breaks, estimating the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent surge in inflation and borrowing costs had pushed an extra 165 million people into poverty.

The U.N. Development Programme said the jump meant more than 20% of the world's population - around 1.65 billion people - were now living on less than \$3.65 a day and struggling to put food on the table. Group of 20 finance ministers meeting in India next week will discuss tackling poverty, along with reforming the world's top multilateral institutions and the international debt architecture.

Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator, called the surge in poverty alarming.

"What this means is a government that can no longer pay its teachers; a government that can no longer employ doctors and nurses in hospitals, that cannot provide the medicines for rural health centers," he told journalists. All of the additional 165 million people in poverty were in low or lower-middle income countries, UNDP said. Poverty levels had been gradually dropping until the pandemic but have since risen.

Interest rate rises meant poorer nations now spend twice or three times the share of their revenues on servicing debt compared to wealthier ones, and about 2.3 times more on interest payments than on social assistance.

Steiner said the UNDP was calling for a "Debt-Poverty Pause" so that those countries facing the most acute problems can focus their resources on critical social expenditure.

Russia Sets Plans for Oil Export Cuts in August

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian oil exports from western ports are set to fall by some 100,000-200,000 barrels per day next month from July levels, a sign Moscow is making good on its pledge for fresh supply cuts in tandem with OPEC leader Saudi Arabia, two sources said on Friday, citing export plans.

OPEC and major producers including Russia, together known as OPEC+, have been cutting supply since November to support prices. Moscow this month pledged to cut exports by

500,000 bpd in August, while Saudi Arabia extended its 1 million bpd output cuts.

As Russia did not reveal the baseline for its cut, analysts and traders had said it would be difficult to monitor. But according to trading sources and Refinitiv Eikon data, the August cuts will deepen export reductions between May and July that already total 500,000 barrels per day.

July oil loadings from western ports, such as Primorsk and Ust-Luga in the Baltic Sea and Novorossiisk in the Black Sea, are set to fall to 1.9 million bpd this month compared to 2.3 million bpd in June and 2.4 million bpd in May.

Russia exports oil and products via the Pacific and a direct pipeline to China as well as its European ports. Its export plans via eastern export routes are not yet available.

Three sources familiar with the matter told Reuters that Russia had instructed oil companies to reduce supply plans for the next month.

Its energy authorities held a meeting with the companies' top managers earlier this week, asking them to make more efforts to guarantee lower exports in August.

A spokesperson for Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, who is in charge of Moscow's relations with OPEC+, did not reply to requests for comment.

Novak said on Thursday that Russian companies themselves would decide whether to cut oil production in August, but that Russia's task was to reduce supplies to world markets.

Russia's total crude and products exports are estimated at up to 7 million bpd, but data has been secret since the country's actions in Ukraine, which Moscow calls special military operation.

Prior to Russia's announcement of plans to reduce overseas supplies, OPEC+ was only managing oil production, not exports.

Igor Sechin, a powerful head of Russia's largest oil producer Rosneft, first hinted at the need to reduce exports as well as output last month.

MPs Okay Outline of Bill To Set Up Trade Ministry

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian lawmakers have approved the outline of a two-urgency bill for the establishment of the trade ministry. 129 votes were cast in favor, 101 against, and four abstentions, out of the total of 238 lawmakers present in the Sunday session of the parliament. Prior to the vote, a report by the Social Committee of the parliament in support of the plan was read out, and then the representatives expressed their views for and against the bill.

Mohammad Dehqan, Iran's vice president for legal affairs, also defended the bill on behalf of the administration and emphasized that the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade cannot implement the set goals and plans due to the scope of its duties.



French Delivery of SCALP Missiles to Ukraine Marks Shift in Western Strategy

PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron caused quite a stir when he announced the delivery of long-range SCALP missiles to Ukraine on Tuesday July 11, upon his arrival at the NATO summit in Vilnius. "This is a strong gesture," said Guillaume Lasconjarias, a professor at the Paris-Sorbonne University, military historian and former NATO researcher. "France is giving the Ukrainian air force the ability to better support the counteroffensive, and further inland."

This air-launched cruise missile was developed jointly by France and the UK, the latter of which has been supplying Ukraine with its own version of the SCALP, the Storm Shadow, since May. With a range of over 250 kilometres, it will enable Kyiv to reach Russian-controlled areas in the eastern part of the country. A French military source told AFP that the SCALPs were already in Ukraine.

Until now, NATO member countries, including France, had felt that long-range weapons could represent a "political risk", according to Swiss military expert Alexandre Vautravers. "This type of weapon raised questions in the sense that the Ukrainians could use them to bomb critical infrastructure on Russian territory," said Vautravers. "The West thought that if the Ukrainians managed to target an air base, then they could target a hydroelectric dam, a nuclear power station or even Moscow's Red Square."

But today, long-range missiles are seen in a different light. Since the SCALP missile has standoff capabilities – meaning that it can be fired from a safe distance away – it won't be dropped directly from the front line. "We should not assume that these weapons will hit civilian infrastructure situated 250 kilometres inside Russian territory," said Vautravers. "Furthermore, Russia's anti-aircraft defence system is so effective that Ukrainian aircraft are forced to drop their weapons from 100 kilometres behind the front line."

This new weapons capacity will help the Ukrainians to continue with their counteroffensive. Such capability is "critical for Ukraine's forces to disrupt Russian logistics as well as command and control", Ivan Klyszcz, a researcher at the International Centre for Defence and Security in Estonia, told AFP. Furthermore, SCALP strikes could help "with Ukraine's current approach, which is to advance slowly so as to protect its forces and reduce losses to the extent possible," said Klyszcz.

SCALP missiles can target bunkers and specific infrastructure behind the Russian front line, as they are extremely accurate. They are also difficult to detect, which means that the probability of the missile hitting its target is very high.

Kyiv has promised Paris not to use these missiles outside of its internationally recognised borders. However, those on France's right and far-right political spectrum feel that this promise is insufficient.

Long criticised for having maintained relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin in hopes of bringing a rapid end to the conflict, Macron has made a notable shift in stance since the end of 2022. Given that the French president continually expresses support for



Kyiv, Vautravers says he is "not at all surprised by Emmanuel Macron's announcement".

Nor is the delivery of such long-range cruise missiles a first. The British government supplied Ukraine with Storm Shadow missiles in May, and the Russians have already announced having captured one without destroying it. This means that Russian engineers are now attempting to copy its technology. Vautravers feels that the new missile deliveries are above all a publicity stunt: "France is under pressure, like many other countries. It is in a sort of race to see who can help Ukraine the most."

The aim of sending long-range missiles to Ukraine is to bring Russia to the negotiating table, according to Jean-Pierre Maulny, deputy director of the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs (IRIS). "The Westerners want to give Zelensky all the means he needs to ensure the success of the Ukrainian counteroffensive," said Maulny in a televised interview with FRANCE 24. "They want to show Putin that this aid will continue over the long term, that they will provide unfailing support, and therefore that Putin cannot win this war."

The French army's SCALP missile stocks are estimated at 400 or fewer, depending on the source. Their unit price is €850,000, according to the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI). The number of missiles delivered to Ukraine has not been specified. The number "is quite significant, but keeps French stocks well above the capabilities we need for the defence of France", said a military source.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov announced in a press conference that France's move was a "mistake" and that Russia would be forced to "take countermeasures" in its war in Ukraine.

Sanctions Not to...

FROM PAGE 1

Khandouzi hailed the huge participation in the event as a sign of interest on both sides to further promote ties.

He noted that the Iran-China Joint Cooperation Commission had been held after a 4-and-a-half-year gap.

He mentioned that the agreements made during the visit of the President of Iran to Beijing in March will be implemented through joint plans.

"With the constructive atmosphere of the commission, we will soon witness positive events in business and investment," added the minister.

He also welcomed the reopening of an office of Iran-China Chamber of Commerce in Beijing.

Majid-Reza Hariri, the head of Iran-China Chamber of Commerce, was another person to address the forum who announced the official inauguration of Iran-China Chamber of Commerce's office in Shanghai.

He said that permanent Iranian exhibitions in China along with Iranian trade centers in main Chinese cities are ready to render services to economic actors of both countries.

In the meantime, Yu Jianlong, the Vice-Chairman of China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), said that Iran and China have entered a new era of deepening relations which would benefit the interests of both nations and other countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Iran and China officially signed the document for 25-year comprehensive cooperation in March 2021.

The document was signed between Iran's former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Back in December 2022, Iran and China finalized 16 memorandums of understanding (MOU) under the framework of the two countries' strategic 25-year agreement.

Iraq Did Not Notify...

FROM PAGE 1

"The idea is we are not giving them dollars. Barter is a form of payment, but it's not a payment that's subject to sanctions," Farhad Alaaldin, Sudani's foreign affairs adviser, said. "We don't want to have the repeated Iranian use of the nonpayment as an excuse to cut the gas supply every year." But analysts speculate the deal may nevertheless violate U.S. sanctions on Iran, thus risking U.S. retaliation.

The U.S. reluctance to provide payment waivers has led to accusations Washington is using Iraq as a proxy to squeeze its close neighbor Iran.

According to the Wall Street Journal, "U.S. officials use their de facto control over Iraq's payments to Iran as a way to deny Tehran hard currency, but the new procedure announced by Sudani's government appears to offer Iran a way to sidestep those limits if it can refine and resell the oil it receives from Iraq on world markets."

How Big Oil Won the Bidding for German Offshore Wind Sites

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - Energy majors BP and TotalEnergies have won a 7 gigawatt (GW) offshore wind site auction in Germany worth a record 12.6 billion euros (\$14.1 billion), allowing them entry to the central European market without a partnership.

Previous auctions have been won by consortia, as happened in 2021 when British tenders were awarded to BP and EnBW, and Macquarie and TotalEnergies.

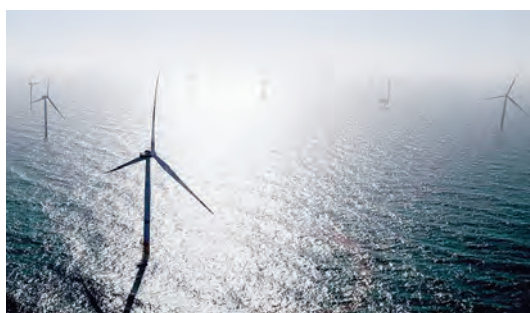
The awards for capacity due to come online in 2030 also excluded leading offshore wind developers, such as RWE and Orsted.

Guaranteed rights to grid connection are included in the new leases, but the cost of developing and operating the infrastructure is not included.

Below are details of the auction, which will be followed by one other in August.

The 7 GW electronic auction officially opened in January and bidders had until June 1 to submit offers. The winning bids for the four leases ranged from 1.56 million to 2.07 million euros per megawatt and set a record for Germany.

In previous German lease auctions, companies have made low or negative bids with the expectation of subsidies from the state. This time, some companies pledged to build projects without subsidies, triggering what the regulator Bundesnetzagentur called a "dynamic bidding process".



The auctions were hourly electronic get-togethers.

Bidders had to offer 30,000 euros minimum per MWh in the first round, with bids rising by that amount for as long as all bidders stayed on board. Once bidders dropped out in successive rounds, the bids rose in steps of 15,000 euros.

As part of a total of 8.8 GW to be auctioned this year - more than doubling Germany's existing 8.2 GW installed at the end of 2022 - the country will also tender 1.8 GW of offshore wind on pre-developed sites in August under different criteria.

Germany has a target to develop 30 GW of offshore capacity by 2030 and will use revenues from the auction to help improve transmission networks and invest in environmental projects.

Improving and developing transmission infrastructure to accommodate all the new renewable power on the grid could cost some 128 billion euros by 2025, Germany's grid companies have said.

With the headline cost of the sites equating to \$2 billion per GW, analysts at Bernstein said the cost was high compared with other similar tenders, such as the 2021 auctions for sites off the coast of England.

Wind industry profits have been sapped by supply chain problems, quality issues and competitive pressures.

Industry groups have said the high costs of the leases could drive up the cost of offshore wind projects.

"These costs must be passed on. Either to the supply chain which is already struggling with inflation and surging input costs. Or to the consumers who already face higher electricity prices and costs of living," industry group WindEurope said.

Danish wind developer Orsted said it exited the auction because of the costs involved. Norway's Equinor, which also participated, said it would continue to evaluate opportunities in Germany as part of its strategy of developing profitable growth in renewables.

BP said the projects aligned with its strategy of targeting returns of 6%-8% for its renewable projects and of transitioning to an integrated energy company with the possibility of using the power for its electric vehicle or hydrogen businesses.

Iraq Takes First Step Towards Becoming The World's Biggest Oil Producer

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Iraq's parliamentary oil and gas committee plans to increase the country's oil production to more than five million barrels per day, according to the release of committee minutes last week. As analysed in full in my new book on the new global oil market order, not only could this be done with relative ease by Iraq but it could also easily be the precursor to further oil production increases to 13 million barrels per day (bpd) if handled correctly. This would make Iraq the biggest oil producer in the world.

In broad terms, Iraq remains the greatest relatively underdeveloped oil frontier in the world. Officially, according to the EIA, it holds a very conservatively-estimated 145 billion barrels of proved crude oil reserves (nearly 18 percent of the Middle East's total, and the fifth biggest on the planet). Unofficially, it is extremely likely that it holds much more oil than this. In October 2010, Iraq's Oil Ministry increased its own figure for the country's proven reserves to 143 billion barrels. However, at the same time as producing the official reserves figures, the Oil Ministry stated that Iraq's undiscovered resources amounted to around 215 billion barrels. This was also a figure that had been arrived at in a 1997 detailed study by respected oil and gas firm, Petrolog. Even this figure, though, did not include the parts of northern Iraq in the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan. This meant, as highlighted by the IEA, that most of them had been drilled during a period before the 1970s began when technical limits and low oil prices gave a narrower definition of what constituted a commercially successful well than would be the case now. Overall, the IEA underlined that the level of ultimately recoverable resources across all of Iraq (including the Kurdistan region) at around 246 billion barrels (crude and natural gas liquids).

Given the true scale of Iraq's oil reserves – and the fact that the average lifting cost per barrel of oil in the country is US\$1-2 pb (the lowest in the world, along with Iran and Saudi Arabia) – what sort of oil output could reasonably be expected? Back in 2013, the Integrated National Energy Strategy (INES) was produced, and this analysed in detail three realistic forward oil production profiles for Iraq and what each would involve. As also analysed in my new book, the INES' best-case scenario was for crude oil production capacity to increase to 13 million bpd (at that point, by 2017), peaking at around that level until 2023, and finally gradually declining to around 10 million bpd for a long-sustained period thereafter. The mid-range production scenario was for Iraq to reach 9 million bpd (at that point, by 2020), and the worst-case INES scenario was for production to reach 6 million bpd (at that point, by 2020). Consequently, the 5 million bpd figure announced last week can be regarded as the first easily achievable stepping stone toward those figures. Indeed, according to Iraq's Oil Minister, Hayan Abdel-Ghani, last week, the country's oil production capacity already stands above this level - at 5.4 million bpd – although it is still only producing around 4.3-4.5 million bpd overall.

The question at this point is, with these enormous reserves in place, and specific plans on how to turn these into up to 13 million bpd in the Oil Ministry's files, why is Iraq not already producing a lot more oil than it is? The reason is the ongoing endemic corruption that lies at the heart of Iraq's oil and gas industry. This not only removes enormous amounts of money from Iraq's coffers that could fund much-needed infrastructure investments but also deters Western companies with the required technology, logistical expertise, and personnel from becoming too involved

in the country. Although commissions are standard practice in the Middle East – and indeed across many business around the world – the practice has become something else entirely in Iraq. This has been highlighted repeatedly by OilPrice.com and independently over many years by Transparency International (TI) in various of its 'Corruption Perceptions Index' publications, in which Iraq normally features in the worst 10 out of 180 countries for its scale and scope of corruption. "Massive embezzlement, procurement scams, money laundering, oil smuggling and widespread bureaucratic bribery that have led the country to the bottom of international corruption rankings, fuelled political violence and hampered effective state building and service delivery," TI states. "Political interference in anti-corruption bodies and politicisation of corruption issues, weak civil society, insecurity, lack of resources and incomplete legal provisions severely limit the government's capacity to efficiently curb soaring corruption," it concludes.

The sums of money that Iraq has lost could have funded all the major projects needed to boost oil production up to at least 7 or 8 million bpd to begin with, notably the crucial Common Seawater Supply Project (CSSP), as also analysed in my new book. According to a statement made in 2015 by then-Oil Minister – and later Prime Minister of Iraq – Adil Abdul Mahdi, Iraq "lost US\$14,448,146,000" from the beginning of 2011 up to the end of 2014 as "cash compensation" payments to international oil companies and to other entities. In basic terms, the way in which such a staggering sum was lost relates to the way in which gross remuneration fees, income tax and the share of the State partner was deducted and accounted for in the compensation paid out over reduced oil production levels.

Czech Midfielder Moves From Getafe to Cagliari

PRAGUE (Dispatches) - Czech midfielder Jakub Jankto said he had joined Serie A newcomers Cagliari from La Liga side Getafe, five months after becoming the first international footballer to come out as gay.

"Thanks to the fans, thanks to the teammates, thanks to Cagliari," the 27-year-old Jankto said on Instagram in Italian underneath a photo of himself with his new contract.

"We need your support, we will give everything on the pitch," he added.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard:
(+98) (21) 44253448

Public Relations Tel:
(+98)(21) 44253450

Editorial Board: 44253449

Public Relations Fax:
(+98)(21) 44253395

Advertising Department:
Tel/Fax:(+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234

Website:
http://www.irannewsdaily.com

E-Mail Address:
info@irannewsdaily.com

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Rodriguez Wins Alpine Stage in Toir de France

PARIS (Dispatches) - Defending champion Jonas Vingegaard fought off a ferocious attack from Tadej Pogacar on the first of four Alpine tests in the Tour de France as Spain's Carlos Rodriguez won stage 14.

Vingegaard now leads Pogacar by 10 seconds after winning a war of nerves in the battle for the title that had hillside fans in raptures.

Ineos rider Rodriguez climbed into third place overall, just one second ahead of Australian rider Jai Hindley, with a great climb and a daredevil downhill finish he later put down to his days in BMX.

Unseeded Vondrousova Stuns Jabeur To Win Wimbledon

LONDON (Dispatches) - Marketa Vondrousova admitted even she was stunned by her historic Wimbledon triumph as the injury-plagued Czech became the first unseeded woman to win the tournament in the Open era.

Vondrousova upset the odds in Saturday's final on Centre Court as she powered to a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Tunisian sixth seed Ons Jabeur.

The 24-year-old clinched an unexpected maiden Grand Slam title at the second attempt after losing to Ash Barty in the 2019 French Open final.

"After everything I have been through, I had a cast last time, it's amazing I can stand here and hold this trophy," said Vondrousova, who was sidelined with a wrist injury in 2022.

"I don't know how I've done it. Tennis is crazy."

Vondrousova joins Jana Novotna and Petra Kvitova as the only Czech women to win a Wimbledon title.

She is just the ninth unseeded champion at a Grand Slam tournament.

Vondrousova's triumph completed a remarkable comeback after a rash of injuries stalled her promising career.

Just 12 months ago, she was an injured bystander at Wimbledon, reduced to watching her best friend Miriam Kolodziejova attempt to qualify for the main draw.

Vondrousova's second wrist surgery had ruled the Olympic silver medallist out for six months, although her absence from the tour at least allowed her the space and time to get married.

"The comebacks are not easy. You never know what to expect," she said.

"I was hoping I could come back to this level and now I am here. It's an amazing feeling."

At 42 in the world, she was the second-lowest ranked player to reach the Wimbledon final -- only Serena Williams in 2018 was lower at 181.

So unexpected was her run that she told her husband Stepan Simek to stay at home in Prague to look after their cat Frankie until the final, when a pet sitter was found to allow her partner to make the trip to Wimbledon.

"It's amazing, tomorrow is our first wedding anniversary," said Vondrousova, who had a dismal record on grass prior to this year's Wimbledon.

"I think I'm going to have some beer. It's been an exhausting few weeks."



The tattooed Vondrousova has a fondness for body art and her victory means coach Jan Mertl has to get inked as well.

"I made a bet with my coach. He said if I win a Grand Slam he's going to get one also. So I think we're going to go tomorrow!" she said.

While Vondrousova celebrated, Jabeur wept during an emotional trophy presentation after her latest heart-breaking Grand Slam loss.

Jabeur was the first Arab woman to reach a Grand Slam final last year at Wimbledon, but defeat to Elena Rybakina in three sets took the shine off that achievement.

Even for a player known as the 'Minister of Happiness', Jabeur's positive personality will be tested after her bid to become the first African and Arab woman to win a Grand Slam singles title ended in failure again.

Trailing 4-2 in the first set, Vondrousova seized the momentum as she reeled off four consecutive games to take the opener.

Jabeur moved 3-1 up in the second set with a pair of breaks, only to falter again as her unforced errors reached 31 by the final game.

In contrast to Jabeur's troubles, Vondrousova remained ice-cool and sealed her unlikely triumph with a perfect volley before falling to the turf in delight.

Rice Completes Record Transfer to Arsenal

LONDON (Dispatches) - Declan Rice became the most expensive British player in history on Saturday as Arsenal signed the England midfielder from West Ham for a reported £105 million (\$137.5 million, 122.4 million euros).

Rice's fee surpassed the previous record £100 million that Manchester City paid Aston Villa for Jack Grealish in 2021 as Arsenal continue their spending spree in a bid to challenge for the Premier League title next season.

The sum is just below the British record transfer fee Chelsea paid Benfica in January to bring Enzo Fernandez to Stamford Bridge for £106.8 million.

Neither club officially announced the fee, but West Ham said they would receive a record transfer fee between two British clubs for Rice, 24.

Rice said in a farewell letter to West Ham supporters his desire to play at the "very highest level" lay behind his decision to join Arsenal.

His switch to the Emirates Stadium on a five-year contract comes after he lifted West Ham's first major trophy since 1980 in the Europa Conference League final against Fiorentina.

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Jabeur Vows to End Grand Slam Misery

LONDON (Dispatches) - Tearful Wimbledon runner-up Ons Jabeur described her third defeat in a Grand Slam final as the "most painful" of her career as she vowed to learn from the tennis greats who were also jinxed at the majors.

World number six Jabeur was beaten 6-4, 6-4 by unseeded Czech Marketa Vondrousova on Saturday, one year after she lost the Wimbledon final to Elena Rybakina.

More pain followed at the US Open later in the year where she was runner-up again, this time to Iga Swiatek.

The 28-year-old is only the eighth woman to lose her first three Grand Slam finals.

However, she can take comfort from knowing that the likes of Chris Evert, Kim Clijsters and Simona Halep also suffered the same fate before going on to capture Grand Slam titles.

"It will be tough to speak. I am going to look ugly in the photos so that's not going to help," said Jabeur after again being thwarted in her bid to become the first Arab or African woman to win a Grand Slam singles title.

"I think this is the most painful loss of my career."

She added defiantly: "I promise I will come back one day and win this tournament."

Former world number one Clijsters lost the 2001 and 2003 French Open finals, the US Open title match in 2003 and the Australian Open final in 2004.

But the Belgian eventually ended her career as a four-time major champion, winning her first in New York in 2005.

"I love Kim so much. She's a great inspiration for me," said Jabeur who was consoled by Clijsters behind the scenes at Centre Court.

"The fact that she takes the time to give me advice and to really hug me, always be there for me, I think it's priceless."

"She was telling me all the time she lost four. That's why I know the information, otherwise would have been tough. But, yeah, that's the positive out of it. You cannot force things. It wasn't meant to be."

The popular Jabeur also received a warm embrace from Kate, the Princess of Wales, who presented the trophies.



Kane Auction Possible After Shock Levy U-Turn

LONDON (Dispatches) - There is an increased chance that Harry Kane will leave Spurs this summer after one club pledged to match any Bayern bid and Daniel Levy's stance softened.

Despite the fact he has just one year remaining on his contract and Spurs thus only have two more windows to get a fee for the striker, Kane is expected to stay in north London with Levy resisting offers once more.

Man Utd quickly dropped out of the race after deeming Kane unobtainable, while Real Madrid felt his valuation was excessive.

But Bayern Munich have been more persistent in their pursuit, having two offers rejected for the England international.

The Bundesliga giants have had their hopes reinforced after meeting with Levy in the week, with the Daily Mirror reporting that Bayern are 'growing in confidence' they can get their man.

The club's transfer committee will meet on Tuesday to plan their approach, feeling that an offer of £80m could be enough.

Kane remains open to all options, including a reported £400,000-a-week deal to extend his Spurs stay, but the north London club insist they will not be 'bullied' either way.

One issue for Bayern could be the renewed interest of Paris Saint-Germain, who The Independent believe are 'attempting to hijack' the move for Kane.

PSG have received 'renewed encouragement' that Kane would relish the opportunity to play abroad, and 'the tone of the saga has changed'.

"There is now at least more credence given to the idea that Spurs chairman Daniel Levy might sell this summer," Miguel Delaney adds, also writing that PSG 'are willing to match Bayern in any bid for Kane,' which could prompt something of an auction as Levy begrudgingly accepts 'the logic of a sale' instead of losing Kane for free in 12 months.

It would, however, require 'a bid that would make it almost impossible to say no'.

That story also suggests 'Kane's main preference remains Manchester United,' which neatly tallies with the Daily Mail saying Erik ten Hag's side 'would also return for Kane if he allows his contract to run down'.

Inter Furious With AWOL Lukaku Attitude

MILAN (Dispatches) - Inter Milan have been described as 'disappointed' and 'annoyed' after being unable to contact Romelu Lukaku, despite finally agreeing a fee with Chelsea.

Lukaku and his representatives have been trying to engineer a permanent return to Inter after the Belgian's loan spell back at the San Siro during the 2022/23 season, having spent one mutually unsatisfactory campaign at Chelsea.

Chelsea returned to pre-season this week but Lukaku was not present to report for his current employers as efforts are being made to address his future.

While all parties involved want to strike a deal, there had been an impasse over the fee. Chelsea are thought to have valued Lukaku - who they signed for a club-record £97.5m in August 2021 - at £40m, but Inter's opening bids did not reach far beyond £25m.

But reports in Italy have suggested that a deal in excess of £30m has been put on the table by Inter, with Chelsea likely to accept.

There is a spanner in the works, however, as Lukaku has suddenly become unreachable to both clubs.

Gianluca Di Marzio says the 30-year-old 'is not responding either to the managers or to his former teammates' and 'his behavior in recent days has deeply disappointed the Nerazzurri club'.



Messi Officially Signs With Inter Miami, Picks a Jersey Number

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Lionel Messi has officially signed his contract with Inter Miami CF, marking the highly anticipated start of his time playing in Major League Soccer.

The Argentine signed with the Miami franchise on Saturday, three days after arriving in Fort Lauderdale on a private plane from the Bahamas where he was vacationing with his family.

The seven-time Ballon D'Or winner will wear the number 10 jersey for the team.

"I am honored to welcome Leo Messi and his family to their new home," said Inter Miami CF Managing Owner, Jorge Mas in statement released by the club. "In 2018, we made a promise to build an ambitious club that would attract the world's elite players. A club that would transform the global view of fútbol in the United States and ensure that wherever fútbol is discussed, your Inter Miami is part of the conversation. A heartfelt thank you to our fans that never stopped believing. Together we will continue to turn dreams into reality."

"I'm very excited to start this next step in my career with Inter Miami and in the United States," said Messi. "This is a fantastic opportunity and together we will continue to build this beautiful project. The idea is to work together to achieve the objectives we set, and I'm very eager to start helping here in my new home." Messi will be unveiled to the fans at 8 p.m. tonight at the DRV PNK Stadium in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. The global star's widely anticipated debut for the club is set for July 21 in a Leagues Cup match against the Mexican club Cruz Azul.

